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NEW BOOKS REVIEWED.

BY FREDERICK TREVOR HILL, RICHARD LE GALLIENNE, AND LOUISE COLLIER WILLCOX.

"LINCOLN, MASTER OF MEN."*

FOR almost half a century biographers and historians have been engaged in collecting the facts concerning Abraham Lincoln, and their records are voluminous and fairly complete. It still remains, however, for skilled and discreet special students to sift those facts, and to present them in such fashion that their true significance may be appreciated by those who would test the quality of "the first American," and in this valuable work Mr. Rothschild is very largely a pioneer.

Certainly, the trail which he has blazed through the forest of facts displays keen judgment, and he arrives at his objective with unerring accuracy.

Starting inauspiciously through the tangle of unconvincing stories associated with Lincoln's youth, many of them rooted in the unreliable reminiscences of alleged boyhood companions and early settlers of the Dennis Hanks variety, the author moves swiftly forward, and the reader soon follows him with confidence and appreciation. "Lincoln, Master of Men," is his theme, and measurement and comparison are the key-notes of his argument.

In six graphic chapters he portrays his hero's experiences with Douglas, Seward, Chase, Stanton, Frémont and McClellan, demonstrating how his genius triumphed over "The Little Giant," won "The Premier's" esteem, utilized the Chief Justice's talents, curbed the War Minister's arrogance, neutralized "The Pathfinder's" mischievous self-aggrandizement and suf-

* "Lincoln, Master of Men." Alonzo Rothschild. Boston: Houghton, Mifflin & Co.

ferred "The Young Napoleon" to expose his own limitations. All of these leaders were, of course, men of extraordinary ability, self-confident and resourceful, gifted with strong personality, and inspired with as much patriotism as egotism permits; but Lincoln's eulogists, only too often, convey a contrary impression. Mr. Rothschild is, however, admirably judicial in his treatment of these distinguished statesmen and soldiers, illustrating and emphasizing all their strong qualities, and allowing Lincoln's supremacy to force itself upon the reader with something of the conviction which must have dominated the great emancipator's peers.

Other writers, it is true, have recognized the remarkable attributes of Lincoln's associates and rivals; but the usual method is to depict them as giants at the commencement of his administration, and then belittle them until they appear mere midgets beside the Chief who overtops them, not because he himself has grown, but because they have gradually shrunk. Possibly, this may be true of Frémont and McClellan; but it is far from true of either Douglas, Seward, Chase or Stanton. Each of these men developed strength rather than weakness in the days of peril. Douglas, holding his rival's hat on Inauguration Day and touring Illinois to exert his powerful influence for the Union cause, was a far greater statesman than when he posed as the idol of the Democracy. Seward found himself long after he had, as "Premier," indited his pompous and insolent "Thoughts for the President's Consideration." Chase was a broader and generally abler man when he retired from the Cabinet than when he entered it, and Stanton was infinitely stronger at the close of the war than he had been at its beginning.

Lincoln encouraged the aptitudes of each of these men, and much of their development was due to the generous opportunities he afforded for their growth. Without a thought of self, he imparted his own strength to all their patriotic undertakings and maintained his supremacy without an effort. This is the true measure of his greatness.

Were there nothing else in Mr. Rothschild's pages but the demonstration of that point, they would still be worth a careful study, but there is more, and much more, value in his work. With unmistakable craftsmanship and keen discernment, he discloses Lincoln's methods of approaching, disarming and conquering his

jealous allies and ambitious rivals, shows how he cured one of superiority and another of contempt, and how he handled them all to the end that the nation might receive the best they had to give, regardless of his personal feelings. It is, of course, in his daily relations with those forceful men that Lincoln's tact, self-restraint and rare judgment show to best advantage, and there is a lesson for rulers of men in almost every encounter between the great Executive and his masterful ministers. Possessed of power such as few men have ever wielded, and provoked as perhaps no other ruler by the insolence of office, Lincoln steadfastly remained calm and just, and his reproofs couched in the language of sorrow or regret effected what the harshest upbraidings would never have accomplished. Chase, Stanton and Seward have all of them suffered from the indiscreet publication of correspondence teeming with invective, petulance and cheap self-glorification, but not one mean or angry word has been traced to Lincoln's pen; and to-day the South can find no syllable of offence in all the utterances of the most tireless critic of slavery. Lincoln was not a saint, however, as many of his eulogists would have us believe. He was distinctly human—so very human that he could recognize and appreciate the various points of view from which his associates, opponents and critics looked upon the momentous questions of the day and hour. Intent upon his great objective, he yielded all matters of minor importance, but not contemptuously or with the indulgent air of a superior intelligence, but understandingly and sympathetically, firm in his belief that others saw the goal as clearly as he did and were travelling toward it with him, although by different roads. Only a very human personality could have been so closely in touch with the minds of other men. This is the open secret of his mastery.

All this is clearly and entertainingly set forth in Mr. Rothschild's volume; and although probably all the facts in his pages can be found in the biographies or histories, they are so well presented that even the special student reads them with fresh interest.

It is, of course, well-nigh impossible for any author to handle such a mass of details without an error of any kind, and Mr. Rothschild's reference to the "required *two-thirds* vote" in the Chicago Convention is merely a slip which supplies the saving exception to his rule of accuracy.

A word should be said for the make-up of this volume, which is a model of convenience, for both the general reader and the specialist. Instead of the annoying side or foot notes, the authorities (which read like Richie's "List of Lincolniana") are tabulated in an alphabetical index, and the valuable supplemental notes are likewise collected under the various chapter headings at the end of the book, which closes with a general index of most satisfying qualities. All these details enhance the practical value of such a work, and it is to be hoped that other historical essayists will profit by its notable example.

FREDERICK TREVOR HILL.

GEORGE MEREDITH.*

To see a new edition of George Meredith is like being young again, and how one envies those enthusiastic youngsters of literature who will, by means of this reissue of Messrs. Scribner, meet the great master for the first time. Who can ever forget his first reading of "Richard Feverel," and all that it meant to his heart and his head! For some of us who love literature the most romantic thing that ever happens to us is the reading of a great book for the first time. The first time we read the "Odyssey," the first time we read the "Morte d'Arthur," the first time we read "Romeo and Juliet," the first time we read Keats—and rapidly to descend to modern instances, the first time we read "Sartor Resartus," "Walden," "Leaves of Grass," and "Marius the Epicurean." There are, of course, many other books that live in our hearts like the memories of our first love—if the comparison be strong enough—those sacred formative books of the spirit, that come to us with such thrilling force and fragrance in the eager dawn of our lives; but, of all modern books, none, perhaps, meant so much to the young heart—of twenty years ago—as "Richard Feverel." It is, I think, long since a commonplace of critical acknowledgment that perhaps nowhere out of Shakespeare has the bloom and wonder of young love been so magically expressed as in those heart-breaking, beautiful chapters in which Lucy and Richard meet by the river. I speak of "Richard Feverel" in particular, because, as has usually happened with a great writer, Mr. Meredith seems to me to have concentrated all

* New Pocket Edition of the Works of George Meredith. Sixteen Vols. New York: Charles Scribners' Sons.